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ABSTRACT

This brief report presents data from the sixth triennial survey of adult education conducted as part of the May 1984 Current Population Survey. The narrative provides information on the characteristics of adult education participants, courses and providers, reasons for taking adult education courses, and adult education course costs. These data tables are included: adult education participation by selected characteristics (age, race/ethnicity, school years completed, annual family income, labor force status, regions, occupation); adult education courses by sex of participants; providers of instruction taken by participants in adult education; reason for taking adult education courses by sex of participants; and source of payment for adult education course by sex of participant. The methodology used to prepare the report and these data is also described. (YLB)

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Participation in Adult Education, May 1984

Over 23 million people participated in more than 43 million adult education courses[1] during the year ending May 1984, according to the Center for Statistics (CS), U.S. Department of Education. These data are from the 6th triennial survey of adult education conducted for CS by the U.S. Bureau of the Census as part of the May 1984 Current Population Survey.[2]

For this report, adult education is defined as any course or educational activity taken part-time and reported as adult education by respondents 17 years old and over.

Adult Education Participants, Year Ending May 1984

Almost 14 percent of the Nation's adult population participated in adult education. Over 55 percent were women. Blacks and Hispanics had lower participation rates than did whites. Of the black and Hispanic populations, about 8 percent enrolled in adult education; of white population, 15 percent enrolled.

About half the participants were under 35 years old, with the largest concentration in the 25- to 34-year-old range. Over 80 percent of all participants were employed; 4 percent were unemployed, looking for work. Professional workers, administrative support (including clerical), and executives, administrators, and managers composed over half of the employed participants.

The income of 46 percent of participants was over $30,000; 32 percent had incomes between $15,000-$29,999; 18 percent, less than $15,000.

Almost 92 percent completed high school, compared to about 73 percent of the general adult population. About 31 percent of participants lived in the South, 28 percent in the North Central region, 24 percent in the West, and 17 percent in the Northeast.

Courses and Providers

Over 43 million adult education courses were taken from May 1983 to May 1984, with each participant averaging about 2 courses. The most popular were business courses, followed by engineering, and health care. These three fields accounted for about half of all courses taken. Similar to full-time college students, adult education participants made traditional male and female course choices. For example, 23 percent of men chose engineering, compared to 8 percent of women; and 15 percent of women chose the health care fields, compared to 9 percent of men.

Adult education courses are taken at a variety of places. Most courses were taken at traditional education institutions such as 2-year colleges (17 percent), and 4-year colleges and universities (17 percent). Business and industry provided 23 percent of courses taken by men. Two-year colleges or technical institutes provided 8 percent of courses taken by women.

Reasons for Taking Adult Education Courses

Almost two-thirds of adult education courses were taken for job-related reasons, such as career advancement. Nearly 8.5 million courses, or about 21 percent, were taken for credit. Of these, 26 percent were taken for a 2-year college degree, 24 percent for a bachelor's degree, 22 percent for a post-baccalaureate degree, 17 percent for a vocational certificate/diploma, and 11 percent for high school completion or 8th grade certificate.

Adult Education Course Costs

Almost half of adult education courses were paid by the participants or their families. Participants' payments totaled nearly $3 billion during the year from May 1983 to May 1984, at an average course cost of $152. Another fourth of all adult education course costs were paid by business and industry.

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[1]Participants reported taking 43.1 million adult education courses. However, because of the survey form design, detailed information was obtained on only 40.8 million courses. Though participants could report the total number of courses taken the year ending May 1984, the survey form was designed to obtain detailed information on up to 4 courses taken per participant. If a participant took 5 or more courses (as 5 percent did), there was no way to collect detailed information on the 5th, 6th, or 7th course. So, course information is based on the 40.8 million courses for which detailed data are available.

[2]See methodology, page 7.

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Table 1.—Adult education participation, by selected characteristics: Year ending May 1984 (Numbers in thousands)

Characteristics of adult education participants	Population 17 years old and over[1]	Adult education participants					
		Total		Men		Women	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Age:							
Total	172,583	23,303	100	10,446	100	12,857	100
17-24 years	31,962	3,674	16	1,556	15	2,118	17
25-34 years	39,929	8,030	34	3,738	36	4,292	33
35-44 years	30,081	5,761	25	2,636	25	3,125	24
45-54 years	22,222	3,103	13	1,405	13	1,698	13
55-64 years	22,057	1,869	8	819	8	1,050	8
65+ years	26,331	866	4	291	3	575	5
Race/ethnicity:							
White	139,777	20,429	88	9,201	88	11,228	87
Black	18,628	1,506	6	622	6	885	7
Other	4,472	571	2	263	3	309	2
Hispanic	9,706	796	3	360	3	436	3
School years completed:							
Elementary: 0-8	21,100	493	2	240	2	254	2
High school: 1-3	26,197	1,397	6	592	6	804	6
4	66,224	6,991	30	2,839	27	4,153	32
College: 1-3	30,287	6,022	26	2,545	24	3,476	27
4	17,173	4,542	19	2,039	20	2,502	20
5+	11,602	3,858	17	2,190	21	1,669	13
Annual family income:							
Under $5,000	13,016	797	3	271	1	526	2
$5,000-7,499	11,562	712	3	270	1	442	2
$7,500-9,999	10,308	742	3	297	1	446	2
$10,000-12,499	12,079	1,089	5	411	2	678	3
$12,500-14,999	10,509	1,028	4	369	2	659	3
$15,000-17,499	10,353	1,253	5	524	2	729	3
$17,500-19,999	9,422	1,255	5	572	2	683	3
$20,000-24,999	17,431	2,625	11	1,117	5	1,508	6
$25,000-29,999	15,090	2,503	11	1,210	5	1,292	6
$30,000-34,999	13,839	2,505	11	1,197	5	1,309	6
$35,000-39,999	10,287	1,919	8	928	4	992	4
$40,000-49,999	12,643	2,626	11	1,247	5	1,379	6
$50,000-74,999	11,981	2,543	11	1,211	5	1,333	6
$75,000-Over	5,112	1,011	4	519	2	491	2
Not reported	8,951	695	3	302	1	393	2
Labor force status:							
Employed	104,464	18,929	81	9,448	90	9,480	74
Unemployed	7,977	859	4	374	4	485	4
Keeping house	31,131	2,178	9	12	([2])	2,166	17
Going to school	6,866	524	2	202	2	322	3
Other	22,144	813	3	407	4	405	3

[1]U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, May 1984.
[2]Less than 0.5 percent.
[3]Less than 75,000 persons.
Note.—Details may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table 1.—Adult education participation, by selected characteristics: Year ending May 1984 (Numbers in thousands) (Continued)

Characteristics of adult education participants	Population 17 years old and over[1]	Adult education participants					
		Total		Men		Women	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Regions:							
Northeast	37,357	3,994	17	1,747	7	2,248	10
North Central	43,151	6,474	28	2,841	12	3,632	16
South	58,348	7,322	31	3,307	14	4,015	17
West	33,726	5,513	24	2,551	11	2,962	13
Occupation (employed):							
Professional	13,556	4,955	26	2,236	24	2,718	29
Administrative support (including clerical)	16,600	3,127	17	520	6	2,607	28
Executive, Administrative, Managerial	11,546	2,747	15	1,601	17	1,146	12
Sales workers	12,381	1,932	10	1,102	12	831	9
Service occupation	13,913	1,814	10	668	7	1,147	12
Precision production, craft and repair	12,964	1,777	9	1,608	17	169	2
Technicians and related support	3,149	924	5	477	5	448	5
Machine operators, assemblers and inspectors	7,870	597	3	402	4	195	2
Farming, forestry, and fishing	3,849	368	2	277	3	91	1
Handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers, and laborers	4,158	348	2	269	3	79	1
Transportation and materials moving	4,478	339	2	290	3	([3])	([2])

[1]U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, May 1984.
[2]Less than 0.5 percent.
[3]Less than 75,000 persons.
Note.—Details may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table 2.—Adult education courses, by sex of participants: Year ending May 1984 (Numbers in thousands)

Courses	Total		Men		Women	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total[1]	40,752	100	17,770	100	22,981	100
Business	8,981	22	4,329	24	4,652	20
Engineering	5,899	15	4,030	23	1,869	8
Health care	5,101	13	1,648	9	3,453	15
Education	2,875	7	863	5	2,011	9
Philosophy/religion	2,703	7	1,028	6	1,674	7
Physical education	2,324	6	684	4	1,640	7
Language and literature	2,167	5	828	5	1,338	6
Arts	2,149	5	509	3	1,640	7
Social sciences	2,080	5	1,230	7	850	4
Life sciences	1,331	3	609	3	722	3
Health education	1,204	3	346	2	858	4
Home economics	947	2	66	(2)	882	4
Personal services	842	2	302	2	540	2
Agriculture	430	1	321	2	109	1
Interdisciplinary studies	357	1	143	1	214	1
Unable to classify and not applicable	1,362	3	833	5	529	2

[1]Participants reported taking 43.1 million adult education courses. However, because of the survey form design, detailed information was obtained on only 40.8 million courses. Though participants could report the total number of courses taken the year ending May 1984, the survey form was designed to obtain detailed information on up to 4 courses taken per participant. If a participant took 5 or more courses (as 5 percent did), there was no way to collect detailed information on the 5th, 6th, or 7th course. So, course information is based on the 40.8 million courses for which detailed data are available.

[2]Less than .5 percent.

Note.—Details may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table 3.—Providers of instruction taken by participants in adult education: Year ending May 1984 (Numbers in thousands)

Providers	Courses		Men		Women	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total[1]	40,752	100	17,770	100	22,981	100
4-year college or university	6,928	17	2,913	16	4,015	17
2-year community, junior college or technical institute	6,820	17	2,638	15	4,183	18
Vocational, trade, business[2]	3,983	10	1,576	9	2,407	10
Elementary or high school	2,495	6	773	4	1,723	7
Other school	1,251	3	528	3	723	3
Business or industry	6,862	17	4,092	23	2,770	12
Private community organization (e.g., church, synagogue, YMCA, Red Cross)	3,617	9	1,075	6	2,541	11
Government agencies (Federal, State, county, or local)	3,223	8	1,578	9	1,645	7
Labor organization or professional association	2,294	6	1,285	7	1,009	4
Tutor, private instructor, or other	3,277	8	1,312	7	1,966	9

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[2]Includes hospitals and flight schools.

Note.—Details may not add to totals due to rounding.

Table 4.—Reason for taking adult education courses, by sex of participants: Year ending May 1984 (Numbers in thousands)

Reason for taking course	Total		Men		Women	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total*	40,752	100	17,770	100	22,981	100
Job-related reasons	26,159	64	12,607	71	13,552	59
Get new job	4,802	12	1,823	10	2,978	13
Advance in job	19,703	48	10,004	56	9,699	42
Other	1,654	4	779	4	875	4
Non-job-related reasons	14,447	35	5,117	29	9,330	41

*Participants reported taking 43.1 million adult education courses. However, because of the survey form design, detailed information was obtained on only 40.8 million courses. Though participants could report the total number of courses taken the year ending May 1984, the survey form was designed to obtain detailed information on up to 4 courses taken per participant. If a participant took 5 or more courses (as 5 percent did), there was no way to collect detailed information on the 5th, 6th, or 7th course. So, course information is based on the 40.8 million courses for which detailed data are available.

Note.—Details may not add to totals due to rounding.

Chart—School credit objectives of adult education participants: Year ending May 1984

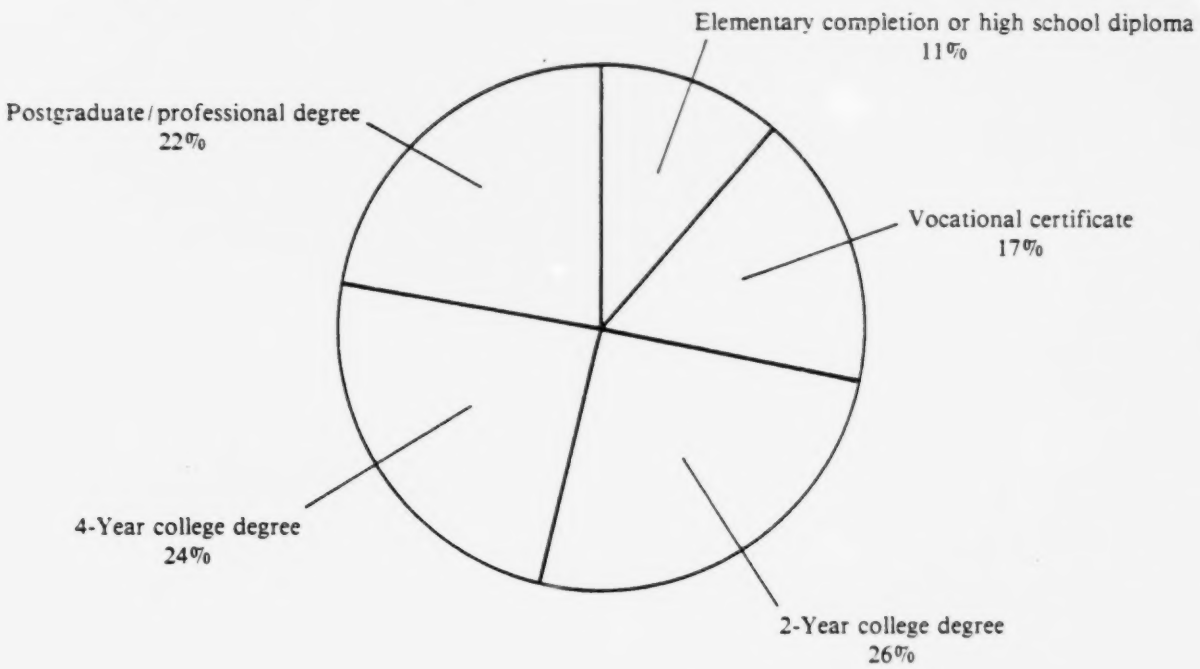

Table 5.—Source of payment for adult education course, by sex of participant: Year ending May 1984 (Numbers in thousands)

Source of payment	Total		Men		Women	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total[1]	40,752	100	17,770	100	22,981	100
Self or family[2]	19,018	47	6,940	39	12,078	53
Public funding	5,914	15	2,798	16	3,116	14
Business or industry	10,165	25	5,845	33	4,320	19
Other sources[3]	7,153	18	2,783	16	4,369	19

[1]Participants reported taking 43.1 million adult education courses. However, because of the survey form design, detailed information was obtained on only 40.8 million courses. Though participants could report the total number of courses taken the year ending May 1984, the survey form was designed to obtain detailed information on up to 4 courses taken per participant. If a participant took 5 or more courses (as 5 percent did), there was no way to collect detailed information on the 5th, 6th, or 7th course. So, course information is based on the 40.8 million courses for which detailed data are available.

[2]The payments made by participants or their families totaled to nearly $3 billion during the year ending May 1984, at an average course cost of $152.

[3]Includes any combination of above, private sources, or sources not specified.

Note.—Details may not add to totals because of possible multiple answers.

Methodology

The estimates in this report are based on data collected in the May 1984 Current Population Survey (CPS) by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. The monthly sample covers over 629 areas in the 50 States and the District of Columbia, and includes 58,000 households.

All persons 16 years or over were asked screening items from the main CPS questionnaire (CPS questions 29-38). A person was considered eligible to be administered the Adult Education Survey supplement (CPS 680) if, between May 1, 1983 and the interview date, he/she had taken

- adult or continuing education courses, noncredit courses, or educational activities;
- courses provided by correspondence, television, radio, or newspaper;
- private instruction or tutoring;
- courses or educational activities given by an employer, labor organization, neighborhood center, church, or community group;
- instruction for adults who have not finished high school; or
- any other organized educational activities or courses during the past 12 months.

Full-time students who also took courses part-time were also included as participants in adult education.

Census Bureau interviewers were instructed to obtain responses for the Adult Education Survey (attachment) from participants. Proxy responses from other household respondents were accepted only if the person who participated in adult education was not available after repeated callbacks.

Since the CPS estimates are based on a sample, they may differ from the figures that would have been obtained if a complete census had been taken using the same questionnaires, instructions, and enumerators. There are two types of errors possible in an estimate based on a sample survey: sampling and nonsampling.

The standard errors given in the following tables are primarily measures of sampling variability: i.e., of the variation that occurred by chance because a sample rather than the entire population was surveyed. The sample estimate and its estimated standard error enable one to construct confidence intervals, ranges that would include the average result of all possible samples with a known probability. For example, if all possible samples were selected and surveyed under identical conditions, and if an estimate and its estimated standard error were calculated from each sample, then about 68 percent of the intervals from one standard error below the estimate to one standard error above the estimate would include the average result of all possible samples. If size of estimate was 10,000, and the standard error was 5,000, then about 68 percent of the estimates would be between 5,000 and 15,000 ($10,000 \pm 5,000$).

Standard errors for estimated numbers of persons

Size of estimate	Standard error	Size of estimate	Standard error
10	5	750	42
15	6	1,000	49
25	8	2,500	77
50	11	5,000	108
75	13	10,000	149
100	15	25,000	223
250	24	50,000	282
500	35	100,000	282

Standard errors for estimated numbers of courses

Size of estimate	Standard error	Size of estimate	Standard error
10	7	750	59
15	8	1,000	68
25	11	2,500	108
50	15	5,000	154
75	18	10,000	191
100	21	25,000	223
250	34	50,000	373
500	48	100,000	416

Nonsampling errors can be attributed to many sources, such as inability to obtain information about all cases in the sample, definitional difficulties, differences in interpretation of questions, inability or unwillingness of respondents to provide correct information, inability to recall information, errors made in collection of data, errors made in processing, errors made in estimating values for missing data, and failure to represent all units in the sample (undercoverage).